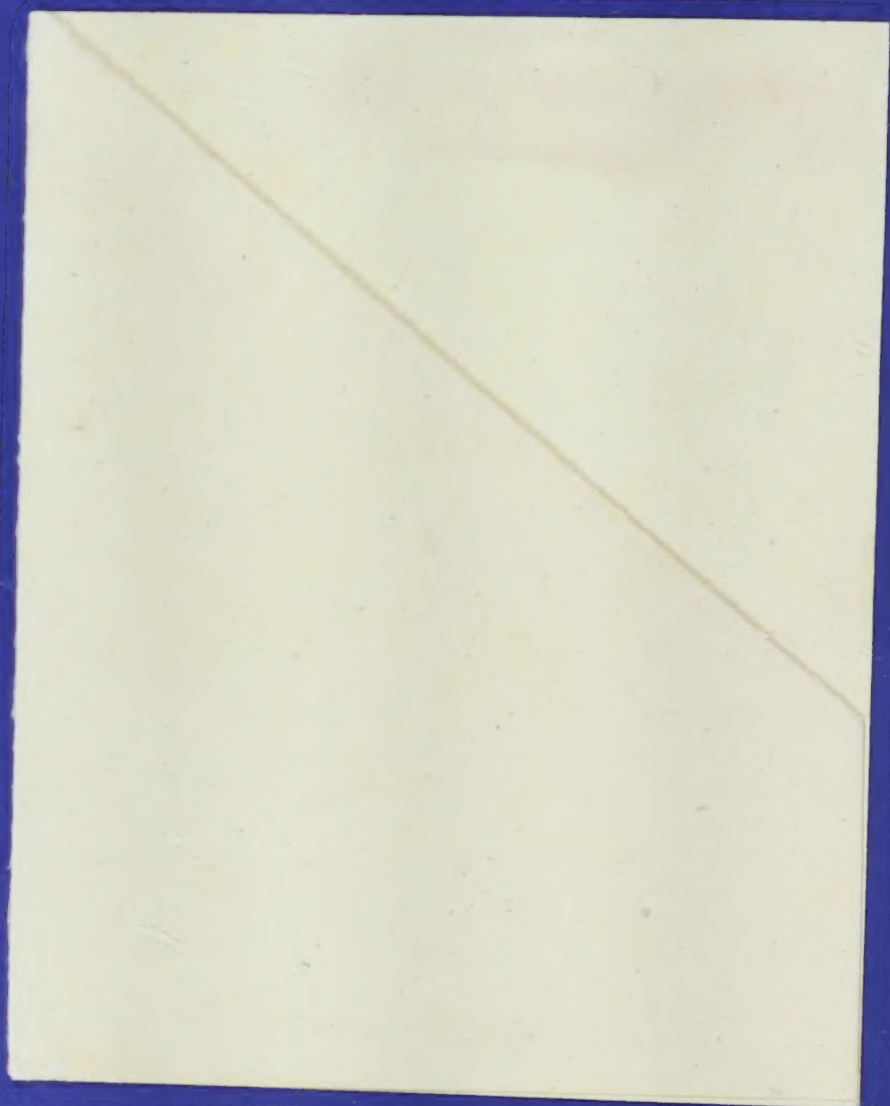


**Development as if Women  
Mattered**

**Or**

**Can Women Build a New  
Paradigm ?**

**By  
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# **Can Women Build a New Paradigm ?**

**By  
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**Lecture Delivered at :  
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# I The micro-experience-a chronicle of personal evolution 1975-82

This presentation is more in the form of a quest in which I hope your participation will not only select and clarify but realistically assess whether women can evolve another paradigm(1).

Of late, especially in the last one year I have begun to feel that formulation and clarity emerge to a greater degree out of commitment rather than reasoning, out of endeavour rather than thought. It is with this frame of mind that I perceive women as a gender based formation having the capability of creating an alternative paradigm, by making it happen, *a fortiori*-rather than proving its logic, theoretically, *a priori*.

This looks like a strange rhetorical statement-but it is meant also to reveal my own position-or condition. The more I dissect and analyse and derive and pursue, the more I see hurdles ahead of any attempt to regenerate a just and peaceful society. The tunnel does not find an end through reason alone. But I believe-it is my real belief-that with faith in the ability of humans to change their destiny through their own will and collective determination, I see the potential of a united women's movement being a force in the world which can heal the divisions and thaw the confrontation and perhaps even the order-the economic and social order.

I would like to share with you as briefly as possible the evolution of my own thinking as I suspect that many of you would have had a similar experience; as also because I think it will help in my attempts to communicate my thoughts to you.

As I entered this field of women and their universal unequal condition, I used to talk of distributive justice. I used to take development and its virtues for granted and make statements, as for example in 1975, such as "women especially in the LDCs are already integrated in development, are already participating in the economy at very high rates. What they are not getting are the fruits of development. Hence just as there is a case for distribution between classes, there is a case for better distribution between the sexes" (2,3).

My next perception was that women could reach for and grasp a greater share of these benefits by organised assertion of power. Women could organise themselves and be organised by a sensitive identification of common critical issues among homogeneous groups whether occupation-specific, class-specific or area-specific. This was only an endorsement of the kind of methodologies to build solidarity and selfconfidence that had been talked about in the west as feminism, consciousness raising, bonding and grouping(3).

The achievements of the members of SEWA, the Self-Employed Women's Association in Ahmedabad (3,4) gave grass-root support to this proposition.

Study of rural women's organisations in India (5) and an expert group meeting on the same subject in Bangkok, made me realise the links between a macro programme for organising rural women to receive/to reach for development and the political ideological



framework. Would poor women's articulation as a separate formation be allowed in a military regime with say a strong theocratic or patriarchal cultural tradition?

Another interesting analysis was the experience in Socialist countries such as China and Vietnam. Women's groups were local members of the party its women's wing. How far were these cells able to articulate women's opinions? Were they different from women's church groups—for example, dotting the Pacific Islands where the Church allocated jobs to them, and used them for their purpose?

It appeared that the power and autonomy of women's groups depended on *How* they had come into being—created by an establishment or emerging out of women's consciousness. Their clout with the regime depended on their autonomy. In Vietnam the Vietnamese Women's Union had emerged out of the women's participation in the liberation war. They were independent and not "set up" by the Party. *They* nominated their representatives to the Politburo. The party did not select and nominate women from the Women's Wing as is done in USSR and China(6).

Similar evidence emerged from the analysis of women's organisations in East European countries. Not being *autonomous* even if ideologically consistent with the Party, deprived them from articulating their opinions as women. (7)

Questions like "so where does this lead us?" or "this situation is so similar to the general condition of women, but what difference has socialism made?" or "given that socialist countries have achieved at least two major demands of Women—employment and some support services like State supplied child care where has that got them?" were discussed at a conference on women in East European countries(7).

Socialism has made one striking contribution to women, namely it has absorbed them in the workforce. In almost all these countries, women are 50 per cent and more of the labour forces. A second important achievement is the free provision by the State of social inputs, especially child care facilities, to release women for taking up work. Since these are two of the first demands of women's movements, whether in rich capitalist countries or in the poor under developed ones, it is worthwhile to know that these two great leaps forward have taken place in the East European countries without any special effort by women.

However, as in most other economies, women were concentrated in the low-skilled, low-paid tasks within occupations. Women were also not in managerial decision-making positions either in economic or political institutions. Even in Poland, the independent Trade Union, Solidarity, which had a very high rate of participation by women, did not have more than a few women on its executive or in all its decision-making forums.



The question arose, why? First, the system regarded men and women as labour, and women were participating in the work force in large numbers, not as women specifically. That in spite of the provision of support facilities, women had not come into public policy areas seemed to suggest that attitudinal socialists were not different from other men and did not perceive this aspect of inequality or the need for women to represent themselves. In other words, within the general notion of equality, the need for equality between the sexes was not strongly perceived.

East Germany, where there is affluence and socialism but where the divorce rate was rapidly going up and there were many single parent families, was compared to Sweden where there was affluence and a strong infrastructure provided by the State to support women and yet a high rate of divorce, delinquency and use of drugs. It seemed that work and support services were important gains, but they did not release women from the binds imposed by historical and cultural attitudes associated with their dominant role as mothers. Again autonomous women's organisations emerged as another necessary condition for women's status, whether under capitalist or socialist economies.

Women in Poland, queuing up for food and other essential goods recognised that the distribution system had failed because of a distortion in investment. Food,—no more produced in Poland had to be brought in exchange for other goods. Any problem in the pipeline ceased to be a nationally resolvable problem but become a political problem between the Soviet Satellite countries and the power centre namely the Soviet Union. In other words, self-reliance in basic necessities seemed as important within the socialist zone as it would be within the capitalist zone for individual country's autonomy. These experiences raised the economic decision making, being critical or as critical as the older issue of ownership of economic power, whether in private or public hands.

It also seemed that it was not ends, namely work, social facilities, education, etc., but how the means by which these were achieved that might make the difference and determine how much leverage or choice was available to women and men to decide the life style they wished to adopt.

The third direction in which I worked was to improve the quantitative data available on female work, disaggregated according to class, culture, geophysical characteristic. This investigation revealed the sharp differences between the life style, perceptions as well as needs of women from assetless households from those that had any form of resource even if it was a home or a pair of bullocks or a skill(8).

This led to an assertion that in the theory of women and development the most important categorisation that should be made



is between resourceless and all others: in India, everything-work participation, sex-based task allocation, disabilities, attitudes, nutritional status, access to opportunity, social attitudes, stigmas, customs, culture-male-female relationships including marriage, varied across this dichotomy.

The tendency to see women as one group had imposed middleclass perceptions and values on the efforts towards women's liberation. Going down to the assetless I noticed the sharpness of inequality between males and females(9).

Twenty-one per cent of Indian women work for a living according to the 1981 Census. According to quality statistics, collected by academics and others interested in women workers, this percentage is an under-estimation due to various characteristics of female work which make it difficult to net. The figure becomes even more of an under estimation if it is disaggregated according to the economic class of the women workers-the poorer the community the higher the work participation rate of females and children. Sometimes as for instance in States like Rajasthan, amongst the landless, the female participation rate would be even greater than the male participation rate and in the range of 74percent compared to the male rate of 67per cent.(10)

There are many other kinds of evidence that point to the same phenomena, namely that amongst the poor, especially the assetless, women work in the same if not greater numbers than men. For example, counting heads in any form of public works sites-whether drought relief or employment programmes like the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee scheme shows the predominance of females in these hard unskilled jobs(11).

Another road to the same phenomena is the existence of the female headed households-households not only customarily headed by females but households where a woman provides the sole means of support. (9) Small scale surveys, undertaken by SEWA, a 12,000 member organisation of street vendors in Ahmedabad, surveys of assetless rural households, undertaken by me, a survey conducted by the Agro-Economic Research Centre of Andhra University in Visakhapatnam District, and analysed by prof. G. Parthasarathy, show the prevalence of such households in percentages ranging from 20-50per cent-the number increasing with the acuteness of poverty. In his J.P. Nalk Memorial Lecture on "Women and Rural Development", Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, Director General of the International Rice Research Institute, Philippines, mentions a figure of 25per cent of families in poverty, as having women as sole breadwinners(12,13,14).

Other indicators emerged revealing that within this hard pressed



community of men, women and children, women and girl children are the most deprived.

The well-known Indian proportion of 935 females to 1000 males however unfortunate, hides behind it a grimmer scene. Again disaggregated according to economic class, on the basis of assets, this ratio falls to 800 and below, with children's statistics being the cruelest of all. Small scale surveys are beginning to reveal the havoc that takes place amongst female infants and children amongst the poor. A survey done of 124 households in Kaira District, the home of AMUL, revealed that the sex ratio / amongst the children of the landless was only 774 as compared to an average of 905 for the total sample (15, 16, 17).

Neglect of the female, of course is a well-known phenomenon—less food, less health care. But what is less recognised is that physical strain under subnormal conditions of food and health assault the poor women and child in greater measure than their men. Periods of high reproductive activity coincide with periods of high work participation amongst poor women, leading to coincidence with high mortality. (8)

This characterisation of poverty with women as the poorest of the poor is not unique to India. Income distribution data, now classified by sex not only from the 'South' countries but poverty in ghettos in the 'North' reveal the same pattern (18, 19, 20)

I had always heard that the sociological family is the microcosm of the world or larger society. I now realised how true this was of the economic family, for this economic household contains in it the economic characteristics of the larger world: namely unequal distribution of economic power of benefits related to ownership of capital, related to access, related to responsibility and related to gender. The less resources in a family, the greater the inequality within it.

Another phenomena of inequality that I pursued was the differences in articulated needs between women and men in, for example, poor rural and urban communities.

The well known 'save the forest' movement in the Himalayas known as CHIPKO—"TO STICK" because women embraced trees to prevent the wood cutters—has many documented stories in this direction. For example, in one area men wanted to plant fruit trees for earning cash income, women wanted fuel and fodder trees. In another men wished to give community land for potato growing, women wanted to save it for fuel trees (21, 22).

In villages in which I have worked, the community of men wanted a road into the village, the women a local health centre (23).

This underlining of differences or inequalities between men and



women within a household in terms of access to physical inputs as well as the difference in 'need-articulation' is not easily accepted especially in societies like India. Family is glorified and always presumed to be a homogeneous institution, where individual members work towards the optimisation of family welfare. To suggest that there is stratification within the family therefore is to break this myth. It is however a middle class myth as the sharpness of these inequalities is related to the lack of resources in a household.

Much has been written about the sociological family-the customary, formal, non-formal rules and procedures that operate within it. But the sociological family is different from the economic family-and the economic family, especially amongst the poor has not been studied sufficiently. These households are not institutions with rules and regulations. Their autonomy is a fiction-and the usual argument that any interference with allocation within the household is aggression on the household's autonomy, a convenient and cruel moral blindness. Where there are no choices, what freedoms are we taking away?(9)

I had also recognised the two zones of public and private power and supported the view that women as organised groups, should take up public platforms and through participation in what are publicly recognised as power centres, draw into themselves intra-family power: a kind of theory of re-ordering of power within the family. It need not mean a surrender of the reproductive role or its revaluation but linkages of women into stereotype public organisations such as the police, the municipality (as in the case of SEWA, Ahmedabad) and drawing from that participation a status which would carry a weight within the family(3).

Another perception that followed was the recognition of the importance of basic social amenities for the poor-even before, even prior to income increases. It seemed as if, for the really poor, namely women, to be able to absorb development there was need for critical mass. The critical mass was health, food, even education(24).

Kerala (in India) and Sri Lanka in South Asia had provided a social base (a historical legacy, not a modern, ideologically evolved strategy) and were able to mount development with less crushing consequences-more positively with greater utilisation indices than the rest of India. (I am not here referring to the current liberalisation phase in Sri Lanka).

I also began to plead for project preparation, based on accurate perception of assetless women, their situation and their possibilities. I took part in exercises to introduce women into a project whether it was an area-specific project or a product growth-specific project. In other words, weaving women as part of a project, as well as building women's component into a project(27)(28).

This led me to an interest in project evaluation criteria, check list, pre-investment project appraisal and post-project evaluation techniques. I did case studies and surveys, changed data collection methodologies especially in the field of employment surveys as well as derived check lists to be used by Planning Commission and projects including World Bank and UNDP and UNICEF funded projects to ensure that women were not negatively impacted (29,30,31,32).

I appreciated and identified myself with the various impact studies, the checklist project, the Nemow project of the Population Council (33), the work done by Ester Boserup. (34). Everyone is trying to enter project formulation and project evaluation territory. To cut and prune and introduce, in order to make these projects perceive women's roles and attend to women roles.

However, as these studies and the experiences increased, I found that development itself could not be taken as given. Many of the indicators and parameters of economic and social development persistently hurt women. Hence preoccupation with distributive aspects, design intervention, equality with men, was not fundamental enough.



## II The obstacles to micro:— the macro processes

For example improved technologies in agriculture whether it was the use of weedicides, hybrid seeds, the shifting of land from food crops to cash crops, mechanisation of planting, processing; and in industry, similar changes from the hand to the machine, displaced women from bread winning opportunities.

At the social level, formalisation of informal relationships whether it was marital relationships as in the case of the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands; or the tribals in India, where education and exposure to modernisation changed perceptions of work sharing; as well as structural institutional formalisation such as the introduction of built-up markets instead of the traditional fairs, pinning down of land rights, and so many other formalisation processes were causing havoc to women(35,36,37).

In the Caribbean the University of West Indies had called a conference which embraced all the islands in September 1982. Investment patterns, triggered off by large countries next door but in collaboration with the dominant regimes seemed to be the primary concern(39).

In a little island called St Kitts with a population of 35,000 people the story was the same as in the islands of the Philippines with a population of 46million people.

A multi-national arrives and sets up a factory to produce garments. he offers well-paid employment to 200 women. The women give up existing income earning activities whether they are home-based or in the informal sector such as in the services, and join the firm. After operating the factory for a year, the entrepreneur decides to close it down as he does not find it viable.

In closing it down he gives notice to the regime but not to the employees and is allowed to leave the country quietly. The closing down of the factory appears as a surprise to the employees. The regime says it is helpless as the man has left the country.

In the Philippines tourism and other industries are being promoted to promote exports and bring some relief to the negative balance of payments. The drive for exports is focussed on building the tourist industry which means luxury hotels, various forms of entertainment which include prostitution (40).

The emphasis of these sectors which opens these opportunities, also pre-empts other opportunities. Women are therefore sucked into this profession in a situation of unemployment and poverty. The unemployment amongst the men makes the push of women to find any source of income even greater. The debasement and exploitation faced by women has become so enormous that relief measures provided by health clinics and counselling seem like straws in the wind. The only way seems to be to completely redirect the economy away from cheap tourism.

Nawal EL Sadaawi of Egypt cries of the destruction of her economy by the liberal import of goods from multinationals which destroys the domestic production and therefore the expansion of employment opportunities within her country and at the same time develops unrealistic consumption habits within her country(39).

Having heard and read these experiences I decided to gather together the various studies and experiences from all over the world which traced back the difficulties faced by women to certain specific investment strategies, and types of projects, to see if then certain investment and domestic strategies could be selectively identified as being women's enemies and suggest an alternative package.

Raj Krishna, the Indian economist, analyses the global economic situation with special reference to the LDC's in a forthcoming paper (41). Raj Krishna documented the trend of increasing inequality both between regions as well as within regions of the globe. The present regimes of trade, aid, investment, technology and migration simultaneously contribute to the trend.

Drawing policy implications for LDC's he argues that the worst strategy of development is to rely on foreign direct investment, except in a few sectors, because M.N.C.'s usually took out more foreign exchange than they brought in and did not transfer core technology. Concessional aid or commercial borrowing was preferable. Import substitution and export diversification should be pushed to reduce the trade drain. Core technology transfer even at a high cost must be insisted on. And in all fora, freer immigration of LDC labor into rich countries must be demanded.

He adds that an exploitative relationship prevails even between the dominant socialist countries and their satellites. Concentration of economic power is not a monopoly of the capitalist countries alone.

But much further thinking on this subject with a specific focus on women has been done in a Paper presented at the Expert Group meeting in Vienna in September, 1982. The author of the Paper (42) makes a similar point showing how most of the macro fiscal and monetary policies of the globe are meant to impoverish the poor countries and further particularly impoverish the poor within the poor countries; and within this even more particularly worsen the condition of women. This paper makes an excellent analysis of the deep and severe structural changes, mostly negatives that are taking place in the globe, particularly from North to South. It shows that these changes affect women more regressively than men. Because of reduction of budget for social and basic needs; shift organised production to informal production; as well as shift from domestic market-oriented production to export-oriented.

It also shows that women's participation in economic sectors increases in both zones as a result of development. But in LDCs this



increased participation is at the cost of lowering real wages, an increased physical strain on women, and general decline in women's self-reliance.

Therefore, whether it is an agricultural product development project, an integrated rural development project; population project or a health project, there are so many built-in strategies for transferring economic as well as political power to the dominant countries, increasing the dependence of all strata of poor that women are only one of the many sufferers.

The author of the paper then proceeds to suggest that special arrangements must be made to avoid specifically harmful effect on women and a one per cent budget be allocated specially for giving these additional handicaps.

It is at this point that I have a doubt. What would be the point of nudging women upward relative to men, while the process itself is impoverishing the whole country and adding to inequalities across the world, and within the country? It would, indeed, be an extremely short-sighted policy.

### III Issues emerging from case studies & Vienna papers

Many more studies and analytical reports have emerged in the last few years. Some of these were given at the Expert Group meeting in Vienna and there are those that have been brought together for the OECD/DAC correspondence group on women January 1983. They note that projects generally ignore women during conceptualisation and hence tend to negatively affect them in implementation - sometimes to the disadvantage even of the project goals(43).

The macro analysis, whether it is case studies of industrialisation; global economic, fiscal and monetary arrangements or food production and food politics, reveals that the existing development strategies either contain in them or get involved in, through environmental pressures, and tend to exaggerate global as well as national inequalities. Our exercises in integrating women in development whether at the micro project level or at the national bureau level, tend to take their context as given.

There is a project to stimulate agricultural production but by ignoring women they have not only hurt women's status and nourishment but also production. There is the project or investment in manufacture of garments in Mexico(43B). Women are the main labour force. The conditions under which women are employed are unjust - wages are lower, there is no security of work and the development of striking power is not allowed nor is there any arrangement for social inputs.

It is recommended that survey, involvement of women in designing of the project as well as in decision-making would ensure that these mistakes are not made in the first instance and that intervention could be designed to bring in some of these factors (43A-vii and v).

Most of the present development strategies especially the kinds of sectors in which investment is increased or capital flows from North to South, tends to improve the opportunities for absorption of female labour into employment. Whether it is garments, electronics or food processing or a third sector which always expands with development, namely the tertiary sector, female labour is in demand (43B).

One of the persistent demands of those engaged in women and development has been for greater employment opportunities for women. Looked at in terms of aggregates certainly the present forms of capital transfer do respond to this or do satisfy this demand. There may be some dissatisfaction with the terms and conditions of work of this kind, which lobbies can try to redress.

But the bigger issue again is, - this is employment at what cost? The impact of this kind of manufacturing process as well as the development of the tourist industry on women, women's social condition has been powerfully presented. Obviously, we do not want employment at this cost.



The question is whether we should integrate women with the process? Even if a production programme will impoverish the poor in the country, increase a country's dependence, should the women's development group try to weave in the women's interest?

Is there a case for women getting a bigger share of a poisoned cake? Is there a case for designing methodologies by which poor rural women are part of the decision-making, part of the beneficiaries of an agricultural production project which ultimately is going to worsen the position of all the poor, in that country, increase inequality, increase dependence and increase enslavement?

What seems to emerge is that since these policies are (a) bad for the country; (b) worse for women, women must unite to protest against these policies and by protesting avoid damage to themselves as well as damage to the country's autonomy. One should see in this a coincidence of women's interest in working against exploitative strategies.

These "stabilising policies" (42) that are adapted by the LDCs are not even good short-term solutions as they make very drastic changes in the economic and political structure which it is then very difficult to go back on. For example, the whole strategy for production for export, creates certain structures and linkages which cannot easily be taken backwards or strategies of production for domestic consumption. Hence, the argument that something has to be done while waiting for the revolution, which leads us to say at least let us see that women get a better deal while some deals are handed out, is short sighted.

Another insight emerges from the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau case study (43 A vi) as well as the experience of the Danish health project.

The Sri Lanka paper points out how the thrust in the LDCs to provide income to poor rural women has meant the proliferation of income generating projects, which at some point comes to a dead end because they have not been woven into the macro social economic programme of the country. One can produce too much of a commodity or one can go into production on a scale where the raw material is unavailable or at a level of technology that cannot compete with the same product being manufactured at higher quality and lower cost and finally coming on a headon collision with national industrial policy which may not be interested in protecting that form of employment.

Compared to this kind of women's bureau income generating activities which plague the LDCs and which are supported by UNICEF and other well meaning organisations, a commercially viable project like the free trade zones and the MNCs seem attractive. But they have their disadvantages also. Hence the need to look at the macro frame not only in the LDCs but the even bigger frame of global economic operations.

The report on the processes and problems of the DANIDA project on India also reveals, through another kind of health example, the affect of macro constraints.

The DANIDA project made sincere and very careful efforts to take note of the historical problems of health services to the poor such as poor utilisation of services by those who needed it most and built in many local inputs to develop the participatory system.

However, established practices, the political instability of the State and its relationship with the Central Government; general nervousness of the establishment to launch on a somewhat unpredictable participatory development course as well as the stereotyped perceptions of health delivery by the established official health machinery has been a painful obstructive process.

The question arises whether in both these cases there would have been some possibility of bypassing or over powering the obstruction of the second and third level establishment cadres by co-opting support from outside the bureaucracy, from voices and lobbies which are able to influence the power centres; but speak for the poor, for women and for participatory development.

It seems to me the whole issue of mobilisation of the women's lobby, the modern radical lobby who would have the skills of identification with the poor and their needs, who would be able to develop the articulation of poor women was missing in the Sri Lanka as well as the Danida mechanism. It is natural that it is missing, as the Bureau is part of the government. It shows that however well-linked the machinery is, by definition it cannot implement. It can facilitate design but it has to co-opt representation not only from the "beneficiaries" but from the environment who can speak for the beneficiaries.

This reveals that however well-designed a project, co-option of entry points into the local decisionmaking process is as important as the design. It also shows that check-listing of technical aspects of projects is only one aspect. Neglect of other social and political processes that go towards project design and implementation are equally necessary.



## IV ISST/my experiences in intervention in projects and development planning-two illustrations.

### Illustration-1

But these are not constraints faced by donor/international agencies alone. Some lessons on the difficulties of intervening on behalf of women in a project, however influential and mobile one may be at the national/domestic level is revealed from my experience with the World Bank Sericulture Development Project and the Five Year Plan exercise(52)(57).

The World Bank in collaboration with the State Government of Karnataka is supporting a project to expand the output of silk. The project sets out its priority aim as employment. The basic thrust is in improving the quality of the cocoon through better breeding as well as feeding and rearing practices.

Initially, my interest was to examine the roles of women-since it was well known that women were deeply involved in this industry-and assess whether the project design and implementation had taken note of this-or whether in some way it is negatively impacting women.

Some inferences were drawn from a quick survey as well as a field visit which included a District Sericulture Project Officer, the woman Development Officer of the State, a local activist and myself. My concern I expressed in a paper and as a result a task force was set up by the State Government to monitor the project, not only safeguarding women's interest but intensifying the benefits of the project by concentrating the State Government's social development investment in the very areas where this economic programme would be intensified.

This became the necessary strategy as I found that this was truly a family occupation where men and women substitute for each other in various roles without too much traditional demarcation.

Going further however I found that the design of the project was such that the larger the sericulture farmer the greater the benefit. For the landless there was no special input, for the small peasant adaptation to the new technology was too risky and therefore unattractive. The processing was also geared up to the export market and therefor pre-empted certain types of weaving, knitting as it was not competitive with the world silk products. This also would push out male and female processors, replacing them with entrepreneurs and machines(36).

An effect that was pointed out by an agricultural economist was the shifting of land from food crops to mulberry thus destroying the access of peasant households to proximate food production and perhaps lowering the nutrition of women and children(48).

The World Bank recruited a well established social science research institution for monitoring and evaluating the project. Though they were an Indian group they understood monitoring mainly in terms of districts reached, staff deployment and production targets (49). The employment as well as distributive effects as well as possible quality of life changes were not priority indicators of this monitoring module.

I took up the issue with the India Project Officers in Washington in the World Bank going from the Vice-President through the Evaluation Department as well as pre-investment project appraisal division as well as the officer directly in charge of the sericulture project. They shared my concern but said this advocacy should be done by me at the project level and with the Indian Government. They responded to a country's demands and requirements. They were helpless.

At the Indian side, the project is designed by an administrative officer with the help of his technicians with whatever perception he has of outputs and inputs. He may have entered the field in this sector recently and might leave the project for another responsibility even at the project cooking stage.

In fact the Karnataka project had already two changes in its leadership, after 2-3 years being on the ground it still had not filled 2000 vacancies, no survey was done of existing shares in employment or income in terms of classes, locations or sex. Nor was any anticipatory study made of the changes that could be expected in the forward linkages.

The State Government officers who designed the project have no access to the kind of poverty inequality studies, methodologies of investigation, ideologies of participatory development, information on how projects get distorted. The World Bank has this. The question that struck me then was could not the funding agencies put these modules in the very early stages of drawing up a jointly agreeable project? Or would this be wasteful, since it is an export product-growth oriented project, and 'people' are secondary?

A similar case study has been written describing the development of tasar silk (largely tribal grown) massively funded by the Swiss Development Corporation through the Government of India's Central Silk Board (35).

## Illustration-2

Our work in trying to dissect a five year development plan and rebuild it with the interest of women closely knitted in to the formulation of the plan, has also revealed the difficulties of drawing



women in to a "bad" process.

Since there has been a very lively debate all over the world that women must be integrated into the development plan, we took up this exercise. In India during the formulation of the last two plans, (1978-83) and (1980-85) women and related experts have been called in to make suggestions on how the plan could better incorporate women's needs and roles. It was found that the exercise could not be done at the discussion level but would have to go deeper into looking at sectors, looking at the allocations within sectors, linking it to the performance and roles of women in that sector and then to try to draw procedural and budgetary links between the plan for that sector and women. We decided to do this as a strictly technical exercise following all the steps which a State planning unit follows in drawing up the Five year Plan (55).

We chose a State, as usually the *national* plan attempts to be an aggregate of a State's plan. Plans are made sectorally against a theoretical model of growth. The sectoral plans are then parcelled out into State plans with a great deal of professional as well as political negotiation on the State's shares not only of budget but of projects. At the State level plans are made not only with an eye on the central format but also what are called departmental requisitions or demands. Ideally, the State plans are to emerge from district and sub-district plans but over the years most of the allocations and decisions are made in the State subject to Delhi's priorities and preference.

Most Indian plans have had strong statement on achieving full employment, on poverty alleviation, on distributive justice, on socialism. The reflection of these goals can be seen in the development of a dominant *public sector* i.e. State-owned investment and production of what are called priority areas for the economy apart from the usual essential services. Poverty alleviation programmes have meant provision of basic amenities, provision of employment through public work sites, housing schemes and welfare schemes. Distributive justice is attempted to be achieved by fiscal measures as well as public investment and price regulation in essential commodities (56).

The poverty line is set at \$ US 300/- per annum per capita. It has been common to have a lively discussion whether the number of those under the poverty line have declined or not due to government's efforts and so on. Poverty is also mentioned in terms of per capita nutrition consumption and there is a lively debate currently going on, regarding the various forms of measurement of nutrition, as well as the norms of calorie requirement.

Just as the poor are an important target to be reached by plan development, within the poor another group that is given a strong studied priority are the scheduled castes and tribes.

We decided to take the whole gamut of all government expenditure which is especially directed towards people, especially towards poor people and see how far this has been utilised by the poor and amongst the poor by women. For this we did a survey of nearly 2000 households in two parts of a State reflecting an advanced area in terms of social and economic indicators and a backward area (57)

Our very first finding was that most of the decisions on what to do for an area were taken in the State capital without any response to the articulated needs of the area even though the government itself, namely the district official machinery may have put up their needs to the Central State planning unit. We found that only 18 per cent of the allocation in a district was determined at the district level. In fact this 18 boiled down to 12 per cent. The rest were blueprints made in the State capital (even this at the *national* Capital) attempted to be implemented in the district whether relevant or not.

At the same time we found that the needs of the majority classes of women could be articulated and responded to with only a decentralised system. For example in the district of Mangalore in South Kanara, women earned through fishing or through rolling of cigarettes. Those who earned through processing and marketing of fish needed some covered shelters for marketing when it rained as well as certain amenities like creches and toilets at their work place which was on the sea side. This had in fact been indentified by the District Development Council and the scheme submitted in the district plan. But the State capital had decided what Mangalore needed was a cold storage for fish. This, of course, would help the large scale fishing classes, namely trawler owners.

It struck us that the articulation of the needs of poor and disadvantaged groups can only be met and resolved if the ears are to the ground which means decentralised financial and administrative power.

We found, therefore, that even prior to weaving women into the plan, we had to argue against the methodology or process of drawing up the plan. It was the *process* which was wrong and would have to be righted before anything could be done about *women*.

The survey also revealed that women and men amongst the poor were not even aware of what are called the poverty alleviation programmes. The awareness was as usual amongst the middle classes and to fill targets, they responded to the articulation of these classes and filled their goals. Thus the intention of the government had been distorted by the governments procedures.

Thus though we were able to improve the perception of the government and draw attention to what women were doing, to a planning as well as decision making, allocation making procedure



which would *in any case* not have the methodology to reach the poor let alone women. Both the cases show the identity between the interest of women and the interest of all the poor. In trying to point out the weaknesses in the world Bank Sericulture Project I found that I was shifting focus from injustice to women to the bigger issue of injustice to the poor and the smaller agriculturists. The second issue became predominant as one could see that the long-term effects of this would affect men and women among the low resource classes very drastically.

## V .The Basis for the New Paradigm :

I had promised that I would present a new paradigm for development with justice.

What had seemed fairly simple to me initially seemed more complex with experience but the basic logic of my reasoning remained. I had looked at the question of inequality between men and women, especially amongst the poor. I had found that this was the most pervasive inequality and any attempt to redress this inequality would, automatically be able to redress other inequalities. (2, 58).

It was different from other forms of inequality such as those based on economic, racial, ethnic, religious or colour criteria. Inequality between men and women entered the so-called ultimate unit of social organisation, namely the household, the family. There can be inequality between sons and daughters, between a father and a mother. To my mind this is the most sensitive and basic inequality. It pervades class, caste, religion, colour or the usual boundaries of homogeneous formations.

It was and continues to be my belief that attempts to redress this inequality, the very comprehension of the roots of this inequality. Its recognition and attempts to reduce or resolve the inequality could show a path for reducing all other inequalities. This fact can both be a value, a binding force for unity amongst women; just as it can and is a dividing force. It is binding because whatever the class etc., women have the experience of being subordinated to men within a family. At the same time since women can be part of a section of society which is exploitative or dominating it can divide women.

I characterised women in the LDC's as largely invisible, non-monetised, subordinated, stigmatised, as yet unpoliticised, hence powerless and abused. Any attempts made to help this group or any attempts made by this group to extricate all other groups who had some of these characteristics. (40).

Employment in the informal sector in traditional economies are often non monetised, invisible, bonded abused. So also are minorities, disadvantaged castes and so on. Strategies for women then would be strategies for all, I thought.

Hence I used to argue that designing and implementing policies and programmes with women as the primary focus would automatically discharge responses and have implications which would take care of all the worst inequalities within a society. (2, 58.) Having arrived at this, it seemed to me then important to intervene in policy, in project design, to negotiate on behalf of women.

But looking at the macro forces at work I found that my earlier model was too simple though not entirely off the mark.

It would not be off the mark in that methodologies built around a



goal of emancipating women and safeguarding their interest would take care of the emancipation of all subordinate groups.

But the methodological change would have to go deeper than tinkering with distribution only; or shifting of the ownership of means of production. Other questions such as what is produced? with what type of technology? What form of organisation of production,—factory-based, urban-based or put out? How is the product chosen, that is, for whose benefit? In the selection of a product lies a value judgement on whose preferences are being catered to, whether the goods are for the consumption of the rich, for the consumption of those in the importing countries, or for the producers.

Apart from my own position, I found that most progressive groups in these poor, unequal societies were finding development almost a menace—and yet a compulsive need.

The question became: how to make development a route for justice?

It seemed then that reconstructing development would have to start from base, or thinking from first principles. One possibility—as yet unexplored was to build it from the experiences of women from the disadvantaged social and economic categories, to evolve it experientially, rather than intellectually.

### **Experiential Basis :**

Documentation on women—their economic roles, their behaviour, their attitudes, their aspirations have begun to reveal some interesting characteristics.

For example, women's overwhelming desire for peace and support of movements for peace; or rejection of the accumulation of armament.

Women's sense of responsibility as well as care for each other and for survival, whether expressed in the poignant commitment of a woman from a lower resource household to making any sacrifice, however, physically dangerous and devastating to health in order to keep the family alive, or the kind of caring that women do in other social situations whether in working together as women's groups or in work styles at their work place has also been noticed. A sense of *responsibility* and a sense of *care* seem to stand out as psychological attributes.

A rejection of *hierachy* has also been noticed. Women's preference to work in styles of equality and *tentativeness*.

In the developing world (LDC's) especially in its traditional sectors, be it agrarian or urban, women find themselves functioning in either subsistence households or in the self employed sector. This would be

limited to the non-socialist countries. In socialist countries production for self consumption is found in the kitchen garden, in peasant households whether in the Soviet Union, in China as well as in Vietnam. This seems to account for 40 to 60 per cent of the households food consumption and reveals higher productivities than in the collective. In other words, women are still in the household sector both for production and for self consumption.

In industry even though large parts of the economic sectors are 'organised' in the developed countries—Socialist or Capitalist—women still play a role in the household sector. Whereas in the developing world (LDC's) which do not have the dominant organised sectors, women predominate in the small autonomous micro production—consumption units.

Cultural and religious roots influence women—whatever the reason. Traditions of carrying on tradition prevail. In other words, women have links with the traditional base, sometimes deriving strength from it through their own networks, and through this maintain some autonomy as women, as well as sometimes suffering through these traditions. I have elaborated on these characteristics and proved references in my Padmaja Naidu Memorial Lectures (9 and its references).

The question then is *can one build on these characteristics and if so, how?*

But as I said earlier its effectiveness or practicability cannot be tested through logic but perhaps through commitment and action.

Even if we accept this first step namely to build a strategy drawing from women's experience, situation and styles it would need a prior philosophical or moral base. In fact, in my opinion, women and development work has suffered for lack of an ideological base. It has been ad hoc and lacked direction.

### **Philosophical basis :**

What would be the philosophical base? To my mind, the base would have to rest on individual autonomy and self-reliance. Many theologies and philosophies of the West and East have reflected on the question of individual autonomy as well as the self. Names familiar to westerners are perhaps John Stuart Mill—even Spinoza and Kierkegaard. The ethics of self-development and realisation as providing the strongest basis for a moral society is however not the popular idiom of today.

Today it is the *collective* ethic. Organisation, and consciousness raising which suggests the submersion, if not sublimation of the individual. Whether we take communes in Socialist or Liberal countries or we take the institutions like Trade Unions and Associations—or the family, the boundary is the group, not the individual.



In my opinion, this has led to a breakdown of morality. The ethics is asked of the group, not the individual and has tended to erode—, allow the decay of the individual's sense of responsibility. On the other hand, women still continue to take and face responsibility as individuals—in the family.

A revival of focus on individual morality—self-consciousness, self-control—might replace any moral aggregations of irresponsible individuals with a moral aggregation of responsible moral individuals. It would also draw more of the society to follow practices which women are already following.

For me as an Indian—familiar with Hinduism as a way of life—this emphasis on individual autonomy with the goal being self-realisation does not appear strange. This kind of belief system provided the base for the non-violent freedom movement that Gandhi launched in India. However, while his use of non-violent resistance to liberate India is well known, his economic and political strategies which he saw as part of the freedom struggle are relatively less known.

I am elaborating on this, as the paradigm I am considering draws some inspiration from Gandhi's views—I want to show its operational power. To Gandhi freedom from the British was only one step to freedom. To him self reliance meant not only liberation from foreign powers, but also from internal domination by the classes and castes of each other, internal exploitation. The struggle had to build self reliant process right from the individual up to the nation.

Swaraj was linked with Swadeshi and Swadeshi with Swavlambh, i.e., self-rule, with domestic goods with self reliance.

Self-made goods in order not to prevent the exploitation by the foreigners but the exploitation by the owners of even domestic capital became a platform for him in which he linked together freedom for the country with self-freedom. He put forward these types of fact-based arguments in order to stimulate, motivate consciousness among all classes of Indians that their interest lay in making independent of the British. But he did not limit himself during the rhetoric, to the more simple phenomena of separating Indian sovereignty from British sovereignty. He tried to make the society liberate itself from various forms of bondage, those imposed by outsiders and those imposed upon us by ourselves.

Another aspect of this micro handmade production policy was the development of retail outlets—the Gandhi Ashrams. Goods which were made by hand, such as hand-spun (khadi) and village cottage industry, were retailed through these alternative marketing networks. Gandhi recognised that the commercial class and the state would not support this kind of process, and the best way to by pass them was to directly reach the consumer through ideological consciousness raising, develop the circle between the consumer and the producer as a mutually supporting group.

He called these Gandhi Ashrams—namely the retail outlets, “barracks” where his “army” was housed during peace time. When there was need to come out in mass struggle, these shops were manned by one person and the rest courted arrest in Satyagraha (non-violent civil disobedience). It is important to see the practical wisdom of these marketing networks which still exist in India. It is also interesting to note that the newly emerging networks of Gandhian women (6) is proposing to use and revive alternative raw material/market networks to sustain their outreach in rural areas with ideology based employment for women and the poor.

For example, one of the greatest blots on Indian history is the caste system which even today presents various forms of obstruction in our attempts at revolution. But within this caste system there is the agreed, particular, specific ill treatment or ostracism or ostracisation of those whom we call the Scheduled Castes, whom Gandhi called the Harijans—children of God, and who are known in the English-speaking world as India’s untouchables. They are untouchable in the sense that the castes would not like to socialise with them would not like to eat with them, would not like them to touch their bodies, enter their houses. They usually live in separate colonies.

Instead of bombarding the society, which he also did to change its heart he put his finger on the critical reason for this ostracism or segregation. The Harijans were basically in an occupation which is associated with filth. Through the centuries they became those who cleaned human excreta, who removed carcasses of animals, who flayed animals for leather, who ate pigs and rats and all the animals associated with dirt. They used their own hands and very simple equipment to scrape off the excreta they carried it on their heads in baskets to throw it in the farmers’ fields. In a country with vast rural areas with no forms of modern sanitation, anyone who performed this kind of task and yet did not have the facility to bathe would begin to show, physically, signs of filth, smell.

One of Gandhiji’s priority platforms, even as he talked of the boycotting of foreign goods, was that these Harijans must be liberated from these occupations, and he fought this battle on two grounds. He urged his class, his brother and sisterhood, Indian society to clean their own toilets. He made it a fetish that toilets would be cleaned by those who lived in the Ashrams or community, which he had generated as part of his movement. At the same time he tried to get municipal corporations to give wheel barrows so that the excreta need not be carried on the head. He had latrines dug up wherever he could in the rural areas and he made latrine maintenance, latrine cleaning one of the fundamentals of what is now known as the Gandhian path to reconstruction.

In other words, Gandhiji had the extraordinary sensitivity and imagination to put his finger on these critical spots for emancipation—



whether of the Harijans, from the other castes or of the Indians from the British.

Similarly, in relation to women he straightaway saw that the assignation of roles to them was the ignorance and lack of imagination of men. There are quotations, when he has said that women should be taken out from the kitchen, women should be in the forefront of public life, women have a highly developed sense of morality and responsibility which should be used in national development.

Getting to the bottom of this, he urged women to shed ornament—saying that the ornament that they wore was part of man's conspiracy to make into ornaments, which man or men held as their particular possession; which men used to display as their wealth. Next he suggested that food habits should be simplified, better to eat uncooked food or very simple, cooked, minimum basic hand-processed grains and raw vegetables and milk. This also was to reduce cooking which is one of the most bondage making assignments that women all over the world are enmeshed in. While in an Ashram as in the Kibbutz in Israel, or the communes of China eating is a community affair, he went further than the community kitchens, changing eating habits and urging people to go in for the less processed diet—to reduce unnecessary time in elaborating cooking.

Concerned by men's use of women as slaves, free labour, sex objects he even went as far as to tell women to refuse to participate in sex as a kind of non-violent resistance to the male tool of subordination. A whole generation of women who fought with him took a pledge of celibacy just to prove this point. But they were not made into nuns who are also celibate, but lived amongst men in cohabitation but rejected their sexuality.

Some of these ideas may look extremist and old fashioned but Gandhi was reacting to what he felt was the terrible situation of Harijan and female subordination in a caste-ridden, hierarchical, unequal, widely dispersed society which had a heritage of so many cultures and religions that it required some amount of sharepness to heal and to congeal into a beautiful mass.

Though many of his statements on women, his do's and don'ts are jarring when read today, he seems to have intuited women, and also seen their potential as no political or religious leader in any part of the world has ever done. He perceived them as equal but different; he had an artless way of identifying himself with them totally. Issue such as prohibition, selfreliance through spinning of Khadi, and production for self-consumption; the rejection of ritual in religion further respond to the main needs of the majority classes of women.

The ethic of self-reliance insisted that each individual labours for his bread, produces as much as he needs and consumes. Consumption was totally controlled by production capability.

Simplicity became a form of conservation, self-reliance, as well as of identification with the poor who were very *simple* for lack of purchasing power of goods. Acquisitiveness can be a basis for aggression/Injustice—so wants were kept minimal.

Discipline of the mind and body was made part of the preparation for non-violent struggle. Hence the insistence on a strict individual moral code.

Hence Gandhian Education called basic education insisted that children labour and learn through their labour. Growing food, spinning and weaving cloth, cleaning toilets (in societies where there is no automatic flushing system) became part of schooling to remove disparities between classes and castes.

Gandhi's philosophy was characterised as being pinned on decentralisation of social, political and economic units. It avoided the tendency for dependence by postulating a production pattern which had at the starting point self-consumption on the demand side and an available set of locally accessible materials on the supply side. This control of consumption to suit the production possibilities of those who had low resources or low skills and were assetless seemed a viable jumping board towards generating equality without centralisation.

The ethic of simplicity bordering on austerity has a special power in visibly poor unequal societies like India. It not only provides a demonstrative identification with the poor, it allows the more even spread of resources. As Gandhi saw it, it was also *ahimsa*, non-violence, as there was less open aggression through less aggrandisement by the few of the scarce resources. The importance of this package is that the masses of Indian women—the poor and the traditional could assimilate it. It springs from values they understood.

It seems to me there is an interesting design here for women to consider. The process, the methodologies the follow-up for achieving emancipation should be so self-conscious and depth reaching that in its swing it fundamentally re-orders all economic and social relationships. (9, and references)



## VI Implications for the women's movement

What are the operational implications of these two concepts namely building on women's experience and on the individual self-reliance ethic? The first that emerges is that the basis for women to come together as a united platform need not only be *issue* based but can be *methodology* based. Very often issues by necessity would vary between classes. For example, a crisis in the lives of the poorest women might be an immediate need for nutrition, wage, water. In another class the priority issue may be the right to divorce. The affluent in the *developing* countries may be looking for legal protection, property rights, better divorce laws, equal opportunity for holding decision-making posts etc. And for the poorest the issue may be how to prevent technological displacement from work, from income earning opportunities, how to prevent eviction, declamation.

Hence issues which are very important for mobilization at the micro level and an essential phase in building up women's solidarity, women's consciousness leading to feminist consciousness as the basis of the women's movement, do not provide a base for declassing women.

On the other hand *methodologies* provide a common territory.

What are these methodologies?

First, the *means* that we use for achieving ends, whether we could co-op non-violent techniques, peaceful resistance.

Secondly, the methodology of production and distribution. Here I see the ethic of simplicity expressed as consumption restraint, consumption 'focus' as powerful platforms for solidarity amongst women(9).

Thirdly, decentralised systems of management.

Before going further and listing the possible action points that can be drawn from my earlier steps namely the philosophical base and the identification of methodologies, I think it is necessary that I share with you two other premises.

First, I postulate that the women's movement or an ideology based movement for women (not necessarily only by women) not only is a pre-condition but a parallel stream or current for the effects of development to have the characterisation of peace and justice. To put it even more specifically the new paradigm would be disfunctional unless it simultaneously promoted the movement with development. In the language of feminist theory it would mean the building up of feminist consciousness. Matching it to progressive language it would mean that just as class consciousness is considered to be a necessary condition of class struggle; feminist consciousness would be a necessary condition for female emancipation. And the building of this consciousness has to be a part of the development process.

My second premise, or position,—to describe it more specifically,—I postulate that many of the judgements made and inference drawn by those who are reviewing development and women, have *implicit* values. These implicit values are derived from earlier concepts, earlier analytical frames and should be rejected if not questioned.

In illustration, many of the papers and case studies including from the Vienna Expert Group see home-based work, subsistence household, dispersed putout system of work adherence to religion and tradition as *negatives*.

In the paper for the SIDA checklist Project, (43A-iv) it says the assumption underlying the checklist is that the donor agency (and the recipient country) seeks to bring male and female farmers into contact with a monetary economy.

There is enough evidence now and many of these I have elaborated in the Padmaja Naidu Memorial Lecture (9) to show that these inferences are not conclusive. Some of these forms of work organisation, some these links to culture can also be stimulated to yield positive results—including the subsistence household and self-employment, including religion or tradition and culture.

The assessment would have to be made against the kind of systems of human relationships that seem best suited for certain basic principles—such as decent realisation, individual autonomy, self-reliance.

In other words, if these two or three principles are the philosophical pillars of our paradigm, then these presumptions or implicit values in judgement would have to be modified.

The thrust would become how to make the styles of work organisation or these roots shed their negatives and build on their positives.



## VII Its implications for follow-up for Development agencies

To build the new paradigm: some action points that can be derived from this for those who are interested in or belong to the forum of women and development.

One, our own work at the micro level. Intervention on behalf of women in development projects at the design and evaluation state; stimulating this intervention through financial support; collecting data on women's roles, women's contribution, intra household behaviour, both consumption and expenditure *should continue*. It has increased our own knowledge. When we transfer it, it has increased the knowledge of others; it has awakened consciousness not only in our class of women but even in the poor women as we reflect their lives to them.

In other words, our own efforts have had some radiation effects on raising feminist consciousness in levels and into areas which had not been reached earlier.

Two, going beyond the micro area, analysis of implications to macro strategies had to be brought together and a strict identification list drawn up of macro strategies has to be brought together and a strict identification list drawn up of macro policies which tend to hurt women specifically—as well as in most cases the poor and the disadvantaged.

This may have to be done under at least two political categories. The list of initiatives and strategies which are part of a liberal economic system such as the operation of multi national corporations, the impact of IMF loans and "free trade."

A separate analysis may have to be made of economic impact of the aid as well as trade policies with other socialist countries as well as with non-socialist countries. If it is possible to identify certain strategies in those countries which create similar effects then there could be a common agenda; if there is no common list than that also can be an identification or analytical point.

Three, even if we have to limit ourselves to the so-called capitalist world and its operation, once we have clearly specified the actions which have an identified negative impact, some attempts should be made to mobilise women's opinion in one united forum against these strategies. One venue that comes to my mind is the 1985 women's Conference. If all of us here and in other international influential lobbies can agree on the *agenda to oppose* (rather than the poetry of the new international economic order) then we can make this a platform for women's support.

Four, going deeper into the causes, the sources of processes which create operations like the multinational corporations; into conditions

which allow capital transfer to become a source of abuse of the women and the poor if may be necessary to look at systems. For example;

- a) Centralisation and decentralisation of economic power as well as economic organisation. Analysis at this general level might go beyond the dichotomy of capitalism and socialism.
- b) In form of organisation of work—the debate between home-based production linked to collective structures and factory-based production. How do women respond to each of these forms? The potential for women's autonomy in both, the past experience and kind of exercises and reordering and re-structuring could bring the best out of both systems. One might be able then to assess which is the preferred system.
- c) A third issue concerns subsistence production and production for exchange. Again, the exercise would be to look at the experience, auditing the balance sheet between the negatives and positives.
- d) There is of course the issue of ownership of means of production—how far this can be squared with equality and justice.

In all those cases choice and judgements could be made from empirical rather than theoretical study. Assessment also being made against the perception of various classes and cultures women of their own options.

If this kind of further thinking apart from opposing certain policies can also be made within 1983-84, one might be able to go further and get wide ranging global support for a creative alternative with specific categories, structures, concepts, projects.

- e) Greater stimulus to development of informed women's opinion. This is not an easy task—and especially not an easy task for outside agencies. A case in point is the participatory research programme of the UNRISD funded by SAREC (Sweden). The aim of the research basically is to develop strength in peoples' struggle especially in countries which have dominating regimes or undemocratic regimes. It argues that entering through an UN agency would *launder* or make innocent interventions of this kind which otherwise politically will be unacceptable to these oppressive regimes.

Similarly the idea that donor agencies stimulate progressive womens forums to be able to articulate in the first instance objections and resistance to international economic arrangements which are exploitative; and at the same time create programmes which are strengthening of the economic and political power of the poor and the disadvantaged might appear equally romantic.

But the only reason why I proposed it is that the stimulus and



programme for women still has an ostensible aura of innocence. The most despotic regimes will have set up a bureau, even a ministry for women. Iran was a case in point. There is still a view especially in Asia that women and children and efforts directed towards them are an expression of the humanity and compassion of the regime, the powers. It is an indication of protecting the weak. Hence even within despotic regimes women working with the poor and the wretched amongst women and children are given softer treatment than let us say men working with workers. Women are not seen as a political force.

This space I think could be exploited by us. Women academics, trade unionists, journalists could be given opportunities to visit and see for themselves not only the poor in their own countries but methodologies used for them as well as by research and other institutions. In other words, build the women human resources in these countries, a kind of skill building as well as experience building which can be done within national bounds in large countries which has some built-up resources of this kind, such as India, but also across countries where the resources is scarce or experiences of the kind that are positive are rare. This is one way of linking women's development with a women's movement through using research and training institutions.

- f) More research, analysis and dissemination on the connection between *women* and *tradition*.

Living through the experience of women and development, for the last 10 years—as a woman as well as an activist and social scientist, I am beginning to see the need for not only better understanding of tradition-created relationships in society but the need also to use it or build on it for creating a just and peaceful society.

Women almost all over the world and especially in the developing countries have been the main carriers of tradition —whether it is religion or culture. There has been some study of the reasons why women predominate amongst these carriers, and usually to inference is that it is for negative reasons. Women are motivated by fear, ignorance, lack of opportunity and lack of power and hence cling to these legacies.

We also find that women tend to be more ethical, more sensitive to moral principles—more responsible less dominating in general. This is not to forget that many women do not conform to this description.

The evidence for this kind of psychological statement comes from so many writings and researches. It also comes from documentation of the kind of issues in which women participate in majority numbers with great zest.

For example, the majority of those who take part in peace movements are women. Similarly, in use of methodology of non-

violence. Again, in India and elsewhere women have come in large numbers against injustice such as confiscation of land, shooting down of dissenters, cutting down of forests and so on. Providing security has been so much a part of women's historical experience that it has become almost second nature for women to care.

Is there some connection between these characteristics of women and women's attachment to tradition ?

Most religions of the world, in a sense, do talk of spirit, in norms of goodness such as honesty, compassion, the universalness of mankind and womenkind and so on. It is true that religious organisations have tended to become alternative sources of power often perpetrating discrimination and inequalities. But in a sense, religion might also evoke goodness. Is it possible that this lesson has, in some way, "touched" women more than men?

A specific concern in this area would be the condition of women in the Islamic countries. Discussion on this issue has become difficult since the Islamic revival has also been used as a force against imperialism, colonialism, —using the rhetoric. Most countries have found that the most powerful way to resist cultural domination and revive self confidence in the citizens is to go back to their roots. And usually in many of the Asian countries roots are in religion. It is Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka as it is Islamic revival in Malaysia—apart from the West Asian and North African countries—and the latest is Bangladesh (Dec. 30th).

If there are areas within the traditions generated by these religions which are particularly harsh on women, raising the voice for the reform initially gets put down as being unpatriotic. Women from these cultures have found it as hard to articulate their concerns as women from outside.

Basically these six action points that I have listed appeal for some compassion and understanding of women's experiences and existing situation especially in the LDCs. They appeal for rejection of imposing analytical techniques—concepts, categories, theories evolved in other situations on these societies. They wish to reject the existing economic order, not only in its concentration of economic power but in its organisational basis and its philosophy.

The argument is developed out of a prior reasoning that earlier political frame works whether derived from socialist or liberal philosophies have not been able to propel the globe towards peace, towards a just social and economic order. On the contrary, inherited ideologies however modified and reoriented continue to propel the globe towards acute crisis—economic and political and moral. Apart from the build-up of arms and the threat of war global inequalities have sharpened with the worse-off at the global as well as national level getting further impoverished.



Further none of them have a satisfactory perspective on women's subordination.

In the meantime, feminists have been active at several levels:

- a) at the activist level they have mobilised themselves, articulated needs, participated in struggles even drawn to themselves some physical benefits as well as social attention;
- b) at the intellectual level they have challenged concepts, definitions and strategies being used in development showing the inadequate, misleading, knowledge, perceptions of women, even pointing to methods by which these can be corrected;
- c) further at the theoretical level too they have tried to analyse the roots of the female condition in order to give a perspective to action as well as to be able to generalise, go beyond the micro and provide a basis for the women's movement.

I suggest that while these efforts at all three levels have provided essential insights, cleared the under-growth, developed widespread bases for women's movements, the efforts still are trapped by the inherited theories, methodologies and categories. (9).

They accept earlier categories, earlier solutions and seek to make marginal modifications, or seek to bring earlier, explanations of process into the understanding of women's condition. For example pointing similarities between production and reproduction, between capitalism and patriarchy and so on.

The new paradigm has to be evolved and built on existing stimuli: religious, social and economic—amongst women and linked through sisterhood across the globe.

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